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## ENTRANCE REQUIREMENTS IN LATIN

### I. UNIFORMITY AND DIVERSITY IN PRESENT REQUIREMENTS

THE condensed statement of entrance requirements in Latin kindly furnished by the editors of the *SCHOOL REVIEW* covers sixty institutions, situated in all part of the country and in every respect fairly representative. The list includes universities which offer both collegiate and professional courses (for the purpose of this discussion these may be counted as colleges), and colleges that confine themselves to collegiate work; institutions open to men only, to women only, and to both men and women. In the Latin requirements of the institutions not mentioned in the statement no variations will be found of such a character as to invalidate conclusions based upon the data presented. Let us first examine the requirements for admission to the classical course.

Of the whole number of colleges named, forty-one specify as a requirement four books of Cæsar, for the whole or a part of which in certain cases an equivalent in other prose is accepted; one college asks for three books, "with extracts from authors like Nepos and all that is to be found in the ordinary Latin reader," another for three books and later, in addition to the full amount of Cicero ordinarily specified, for Sallust's *Catiline*, so that both these institutions practically require an amount of prose equal to four books; six colleges ask for five books, and one for six books. Thus fifty colleges have a specific requirement covering four books of Cæsar, or an equivalent, or a little more. But there are five institutions which test the proficiency of the candidate for admission by an examination "at sight" upon passages of "simple prose," or on "passages from Nepos and Cæsar," or on passages of "narrative prose similar to that of Cæsar." These examinations "at sight" the student who has properly read four books of Cæsar, or two or three books of

Cæsar and a corresponding amount of Nepos, will pass without difficulty. Practically fifty-five colleges out of sixty, or a fraction more than 91 per cent., are agreed in the requirement of four books of Cæsar, or an equivalent, in a few cases with an additional amount so slight as not to affect the general result. To put the case from another point of view, all schools which properly use the time ordinarily devoted to reading four books of Cæsar, will prepare their students in easy prose for 91 per cent. of the colleges of the country. As against this overwhelming majority, three colleges ask for but three books, two colleges for two books; five colleges thus fall below the general standard, a fraction less than 9 per cent. of the whole number.

Six orations of Cicero (*De Imperio Gn. Pompei* is here counted as one oration) are made a fixed requirement by twenty-eight colleges; one asks for six orations and Sallust's *Catiline* or *Jugurtha*, one for six orations and Sallust's *Catiline* "in part," one for six orations and forty letters, one for six orations and the *De Amicitia*; nine require seven orations, three nine orations, making a total of forty-four colleges that have a specific requirement of six orations with or without some additional matter. Three colleges test the candidate's proficiency by an examination at sight, sufficient preparation for which could be made by the proper study of six orations or of six orations and a comparatively small number of letters. Thus the requirement of forty-seven colleges can be met by the reading of six orations, or of six orations and no great amount in Cicero<sup>1</sup> or Sallust in addition; good schools in all parts of the country now generally spend about the same amount of time on Cicero, meeting the more extended requirement by more rapid reading near the end of their work in this author. Against this total of forty-seven colleges (a little more than 78 per cent.), two make no requirement, five ask for four orations, one for four orations and four *Lives* of Nepos, five for five orations; thirteen colleges, a frac-

<sup>1</sup>The requirement of the *De Amicitia* in connection with the orations would be difficult to justify on pedagogical grounds.

tion less than 22 per cent., are below the average of the majority, but six of them are not far below it.<sup>1</sup>

A comparative view of the requirements in Latin verse brings before us a greater variation than has been found in the case of the requirements in simple and oratorical prose. Five colleges have no requirement in Latin verse; one asks for two books of Virgil, one for three books; two require four books, one five books. On the other hand twenty-eight colleges set a requirement of six books, one of eight books, one of nine books (with an alternative of six books and 1500 lines of Ovid); eight ask for six books of the *Æneid* and the *Eclogues*, six for six books of the *Æneid*, and either the reading of a fixed amount of Ovid, or the ability to sustain a sight examination in Ovid, three for six books of the *Æneid*, the *Eclogues*, and Ovid as above; two give a sight test in Latin verse, which involves at least the previous reading of six books of Virgil and a certain amount of Ovid. Reducing the results to percentages, 8  $\frac{1}{3}$  per cent. have no requirement in verse, 8  $\frac{1}{3}$  per cent. have a requirement amounting to less than six books of Virgil; 46  $\frac{2}{3}$  per cent. ask for six books of Virgil, 36  $\frac{2}{3}$  per cent. ask for more than six books of Virgil, this additional amount varying between more of Virgil, and some of Ovid.

It is not worth while to analyze the requirements in Latin prose; anyone familiar with the situation knows that while there is much diversity of opinion regarding the methods of teaching the subject, theoretically all the colleges hold to substantially the same standard; the schools are making a fairly rapid and even advance in satisfying their demands.

That the requirement in Latin for admission to the Ph.B. course, in institutions which give this degree, should not differ materially from that set for admission to the classical course, is now so generally conceded that detailed discussion of the requirement in the list under this head is unnecessary.

At present there seems to be a tendency to extend the

<sup>1</sup>If four of the longer Lives of Nepos were specified, four orations and four Lives of Nepos would of course be a fair equivalent of six orations.

requirement of Latin for admission to Scientific Courses, and to increase rather than diminish the amount. No general conclusions based upon existing conditions would be of value; but the diversity in the requirements, as a glance at the list will show, can be met in nearly all cases by the simple arrangement of maximum and minimum.

## II. CAN NATIONAL UNIFORMITY OF ENTRANCE REQUIREMENTS IN LATIN BE SECURED?

Entrance requirements in Latin, as in other subjects, are devised not primarily in the interest of the college, nor again of the school in which the student receives his preparatory training; they are fixed in the interest of the student himself, in order to direct and stimulate him, with the help of his teachers, to such mastery of Latin as will enable him to enter with the greatest profit upon collegiate work. It follows that the scope and character of the requirements will be conditioned by the character of the collegiate work which the student is to undertake, and also by the educational economy of the system under which he is fitted for it.

There is substantial agreement upon the proposition that, under our present conditions, students who enter college with the amount of Latin represented by the maximum entrance requirements of the stronger institutions, ought to pursue the subject about two years in college in order to secure the largest benefit from the study in point of general culture and discipline. In other words, the first two years of collegiate Latin work are not special, or professional; they do not belong to the work of the university in the higher sense, but are, to use the most convenient word, purely gymnasial. There is less difference in character between the freshman Latin work of the average college and the fourth year work of the better schools than there is between the work of the sophomore year and the more advanced elective courses. The student on admission to college is not expected to have the larger first-hand acquaintance with masterpieces of Latin literature, the facility in the use of the language,

and the deeper insight into the various aspects of the Roman civilization, which are prerequisite to special work in the subject. Admission to college involves a transition, not from gymnasial to university work, but from the earlier to the latter part of the gymnasial course. Whether the two parts of this general or gymnasial course will ultimately be brought together in our institutions of secondary education, leaving the universities to do only advanced work, is a question on which evidence is accumulating, but which need not be discussed here. The point to be emphasized is, the essential continuity of Latin study, for the general student in the literary-historical group, from the first elements to the end of the sophomore year in college. At this point the general student parts company with the special student of Latin, who goes on with the more advanced electives.

The schools which undertake to give the earlier gymnasial or preparatory course fall into three classes: endowed academies, private schools, and the public high schools; with the last may be reckoned a small number of normal schools which provide a so-called academic course. In the earlier decades of the century preparation for college was generally acquired in the schools of the first two classes; of late years the increase in the number of those who have obtained their preparatory course in the public schools has been remarkable. Formerly the various colleges, dealing directly with schools upon private foundations, and with a limited number of public schools, were able to dictate the precise kind and amount of preparation in all subjects; now, taking advantage of the extension of the railways, which have made the country practically one, students come to the same college from all parts, and from every kind of school. The schools are called upon to fit a boy for college, not for a college; the decision of the particular institution is generally left to a much later period in the boy's studies than it used to be. The freshman classes of the colleges, small as well as great, often receive accessions from the most unexpected quarters. Formerly the drift of students was from the west wholly toward the east; now there is a very perceptible counter-current, and more students come from the states

near the seaboard to certain of the western institutions every year. Another fact that should here be noted is, that only a small proportion of the graduates of the public schools go to college. The opinion of educators seems to be unanimously in favor of the view that students who purpose to go to college, and those who do not, should be taught in the same classes and in the same way; if this is conceded, plainly there should be no conflict between the interests of the few and the interests of the many.

The bearing of these considerations is obvious. The day of arbitrary demands on the part of the colleges has gone by. Not to make unduly prominent the interest of the pupil, though this is after all the main thing, it is clear that at the present time entrance requirements approved only from the narrow point of view of the college examiner, will not meet the conditions. Friction between school and college can be avoided only by placing the Latin work of both on a scientific educational basis, and by then adjusting its scope so that the course of the one will begin where that of the other ends. When this adjustment is made, the graduate of any good high school will have no difficulty, so far as his Latin is concerned, in gaining admission to any college.

The question of the method which the colleges shall avail themselves of in order to satisfy themselves of the student's proficiency, is not pertinent here. On educational grounds it is clear that the transition from school to college ought to be made with as slight a degree of nervous strain and mental disquiet as possible; but so far as the relation of the work of the lower to the higher institution is concerned, it makes little difference whether the colleges examine applicants "at sight" or on prescribed texts; whether they admit by examination only or by certificate from schools whose work has been duly inspected by college officers. National uniformity of entrance requirements must rest on something more fundamental. It implies a substantial agreement in practice (statements in catalogues and courses of study have no significance unless they are lived up to)

upon a standard of Latin work that may be expressed in terms of time, range, and quality; that is to say, the schools of the country must undertake to cover about the same ground in about the same time and with about the same average of efficiency in the class-room instruction. This does not mean that in different schools the same Latin authors must be read, or in the same order, or that any two teachers would be called upon to teach in the same way; but it does mean that there should be a consensus of opinion regarding the degree of proficiency in Latin to which the graduate of a school who purposes to enter college should attain, and that all schools should bring their students to this standard, each in its own way.

Of the three elements just mentioned, time, range, and quality, the first is subordinate to the second. Exactly what knowledge of Latin may rightfully be required today of a student who presents himself for admission to the classical course of the college? On this point there will be no difference of opinion. The ideal candidate's proficiency may be analytically presented as follows:

(*a*) Correctness, and a certain degree of fluency, in pronouncing Latin, whether the candidate for admission reads a text or pronounces his own written or oral exercise.

(*b*) Accurate knowledge of Latin grammar, including all ordinary forms and constructions.

(*c*) Facility in translating simple passages of prose and verse, whether previously studied in course or not, into idiomatic English.

(*d*) A certain measure of facility in rendering into Latin simple English sentences and paragraphs.

(*e*) Acquaintance at first hand with three or more Latin authors, through representative portions of their works.

(*f*) Accurate knowledge of a considerable range of biographical, literary, and mythological detail, as well as of the more important features of the political, military, and domestic antiquities of the classics studied.



Some explanation ought to be offered here regarding several of these specifications, in relation to the needs both of the student who enters college and of him who goes at once into practical life; but I have almost reached the limits of space assigned me.

The great majority of those competent to pass an opinion on the subject are in agreement, further, in regard to the time necessary to secure the degree of proficiency in Latin indicated. Commencing Latin at the usual age, the student can reasonably hope, with good instructors, to reach the standard in four years with five hours of recitation per week. A very large number of schools now give this amount of time to Latin; and no school programme will have any chance of national acceptance that assigns less time to the subject. In this connection the report of the Committee of Twelve of the American Philological Association (see pp. 472-474) is of especial significance. The movement in favor of a six-year Latin course is making good progress; the extension of the course to six or even five years will obviate certain difficulties that now arise, besides bringing the study of the language earlier in the life of the pupil, as sound pedagogy demands.

Theoretically there is probably no disagreement regarding the high quality of instructors in Latin that should everywhere prevail, that is not less essential to uniformity of excellence in the results of Latin work than the other two elements. Both college men and school men are now in a very conciliatory mood. The American people are impatient of that which is antiquated or unorganized; the national genius tends to organize everything with which it comes in contact. The time is ripe for a satisfactory adjustment of school and college work for the whole country. But the first condition of the successful operation of any system that may be devised to correlate the two parts of our gymnasial Latin course more closely, lies in the raising of the standard of teaching in a considerable proportion of the schools. This obligation is incumbent upon superintendents and principals to see to it, not merely that sufficient time is allowed for Latin study, and that the course is laid out in

accordance with the best established principles of the science of pedagogy as applied to Latin, but also that the teachers in charge have the scholarly equipment needed to secure the best results of their efforts.<sup>1</sup>

A careful study of the Latin entrance requirements the country over leads to the conviction that there is much less diversity than has generally been supposed. The first step to be taken now is, to lay out a four-year Latin course, and a six-year Latin course, on a sound educational foundation. This work should be done by a national committee of school and college Latin teachers; until it is done, all discussion of the details of entrance requirements is apt to be fruitless. There is little doubt that the report of this committee would be warmly welcomed, and that a course might finally be arranged that would gain general acceptance. Let a national movement be inaugurated along the lines indicated, and the adjustment of college entrance requirements will be found to be a matter of detail that will occasion less and less difficulty; the interests of the colleges and of the schools are at this point identical.

FRANCIS W. KELSEY

<sup>1</sup> See THE SCHOOL REVIEW for July 1895, p. 384; also *The Educational Review* for June 1894, pp. 31-38.